

Sunday, October 2, 2005

## New center puts learning at fore-front

icouldbe.org e-mentors guide Tiger Woods Learning Center  
teens

By **ERICA PEREZ**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

ANAHEIM – Tiger Woods visited his high school stomping grounds Saturday - not to play a round of golf, but to give students from his home turf a peek at the education center he created for them.

Woods joined a dozen students from Savanna and Western high schools on a tour of the nearly finished 35,000- square-foot Tiger Woods Learning Center at the H.G. Dad Miller Golf Course, where Woods used to play.

Set to open in January, the \$25 million center will include a 14-acre driving range and 18-hole putting course. But the focus won't be golf. The center, at Crescent Avenue and Gilbert Street, will offer free academic classes and mentorship for students in grades four through 12.

The center will provide hands-on educational and career programs for local students, targeting those in Anaheim and Magnolia elementary school districts and the Anaheim Union High School District, where three-quarters of graduates have not met college eligibility requirements.

"Kids need a path to their future careers," said Woods, a Western High School graduate who has pitched in about \$6 million. "We need to bridge that gap, get them excited about careers."

The Tiger Woods Foundation leases the site from the county on a \$1-per-year lease agreement.

The program emphasizes math and science, offering a forensic lab for grades four through six and programs in robotics, engineering and aerospace for older students.

The students touring Saturday have been working with the executive director for a month testing a computer- based career mentoring program and giving feedback on the center's plans.

Jose Giron, 15, a Savanna High junior interested in automotive engineering, might apply for a class in computer- aided design.

"I like the part that you interact – you try to do it, not really just study about it," Giron said.

Aspiring defense lawyer Amy Depuy, 16, a Savanna High junior, has two mentors: an attorney and a paralegal.

"I didn't know you have to take psychology classes to get into law school – to understand the criminal mind," she said.

Depuy is excited to live just two blocks from the center's wireless computer lab, which will be open on nights and weekends.

"My computer at home is really slow," she said.

At the facility's multimedia center, students can edit video and cut music tracks. There's also a lounge, café and 250-seat auditorium. The second floor will have seven classrooms for various subjects.

Executive Director Katherine Bihl, a former principal at Vista View Middle School in Fountain Valley, received input from local educators to set up the pilot program: six-week after-school programs for older students and monthlong day programs for off-track elementary students.

Bihl hopes the program will involve at least 3,000 students in the first year with a staff of 24 full- and part-time teachers.

For Woods, the goal was to influence local students more deeply than he could in the occasional golf clinic.

"This is home for me," Woods said, looking out from the center's second floor onto what will soon become the driving range. He smiled.

"It's inspiring to me to see the kids this excited. That's why I did it."